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Rep. Sanfelippo's bike lane request to strengthen local control

MADISON, Wis. – State Rep. Joe Sanfelippo, R-New Berlin, has filed a budget motion request that builds upon Gov. Scott Walker's proposed improvements to the Complete Streets law by giving local governments a voice in the matter.

Under current state policy, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation requires, with rare exceptions, the creation of bicycle lanes or pedestrian paths in all highway construction and reconstruction projects that receive state or federal funding.

"The department's rigid enforcement of this policy oftentimes leads to bicycle lanes being constructed in inappropriate and impractical locations," Sanfelippo said. "We've seen instances where scarce resources are spent on bicycle lanes that are sparsely utilized or critical tax bases are destroyed as the DOT confiscates private property to construct these lanes with no local input."

Walker is proposing to change the state provision of the Complete Streets law so bicycles lanes or pedestrian walkways are not automatically included in every highway project. The state would still follow the federal guidelines which specify that "due consideration" must be given to the construction of the amenities.

Sanfelippo's budget motion takes it a step further by giving affected local governments the final say in establishing bicycle lanes in their communities.

"We're not saying this is the end of bike trails or pedestrian paths," Sanfelippo said. "All we are doing is introducing common sense into the decision-making process by adding an element of local control to ensure these accommodations are only installed where they are practical."

Walker's proposal is projected to save taxpayers at least \$7.4 over the next biennium, according to budget documents. The Wisconsin Legislative Council said in a memo it does not expect the state to lose any federal transportation funding by changing the law or adopting Sanfelippo's budget motion.

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